



# The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

[www.polyramblers.org.uk](http://www.polyramblers.org.uk)

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## Chairman's message

At the last committee meeting, Hilary had a very disturbing tale to tell. Her sister had been out walking with a group which was attacked by a group of cows. She sustained several broken ribs and was hospitalised, although thankfully she discharged herself within a few days and will make a full recovery. Some of us have had bad experiences with cattle, but the point to take from this incident is that her group were unable to contact her husband, the attack having rendered her unconscious. His details were on her mobile phone, but this was unusable having been trampled on.

It is increasingly common for people to carry ICE (In Case of Emergency) cards. On this you note your own details and also those of one or two relatives or friends. You can also add medical information such as allergies and blood type. There are a number of these available free from the internet that you can fill in and print yourself, such as <http://geticecard.com/>. The Ramblers Association don't appear to offer one, although Ramblers Scotland do. There are also various companies that, for a charge, will provide plastic coated cards, key fobs etc. It's obviously a personal choice, but the Committee strongly recommend that you carry something of this nature in your purse or wallet.

Apart from a very hot spell in June, the weather this summer has been pretty average, and so as custodian of the records, I am pleased to note that attendance on walks has been up on last year by almost 20 per cent. A big factor in this is that members are coming forward and offering shorter walks as alternatives to those of 10 miles and more. Many thanks to those of you that do this on a regular basis, but as always we welcome new leaders.



View of Puente Nuevo bridge, Ronda  
(see Mike's report on Grazalema)

Material for this edition collated by the committee.  
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**Mike Coyle**

## **The Polytechnic Rambling Club**

(in association with the  
University of Westminster)

*Founded 1885*

Affiliated to the Ramblers'  
Association (Inner London Area)

Affiliated to HF Holidays

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Hilary Abbey

Pam Beach

Kim Chowns

Dominique Le Marchand

Solvig Starborg

Stuart Swan

Geoffrey Waters

#### **CONTACT FOR CORRESPONDENCE**

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k.chowns@yahoo.co.uk

**Club's Facebook page:**

<http://tinyurl.com/qclyyfq>

## **Good News for Gold Card Holders**

Those of us who hold an Annual Season Ticket on the National Rail Network (formerly known as a British Rail season ticket), know that this ticket doubles up as a Gold Card railcard. This is identified on the ticket by its yellow/gold colour and the wording "Gold Card" along the bottom of the ticket. Such people will be pleased to know that earlier this year the Area covered by Gold Cards that qualify for 1/3 discounted fares has increased.

Previously it was the same area as that for Network Cards, but now covers Suffolk, Norfolk and the West Midlands. You can see the new Gold Card Area map by clicking on this [link](#).

As well as covering ALL stations in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, the key additions in the West Midlands are:

- London Midland trains from Euston via Birmingham to Worcester, Redditch, Shrewsbury and Stafford lines. Also via Nuneaton to Stafford (West Coast route)
- Chiltern Railways trains from Marylebone to Stratford upon Avon, Kidderminster lines.
- Arriva Wales trains between Birmingham International and Shrewsbury.

But you should note that Gold Card discounts are still not valid on Virgin West Coast trains from Euston or Virgin East Coast trains from Kings Cross. However, they are valid on Heathrow Express, Heathrow Connect trains from Paddington.

Shamefully there is no extension of this Area into the East Midlands from Bedford (for me)!

Geoffrey Waters

## 2016 SNOW WALKING WEEKEND – Friday, 15 to Monday, 18 JANUARY

The snow-walking weekend will be in Füssen, Bavaria (see <http://www.fuessen.de/en.html>).

Füssen (808m) is located at the very end of the Romantic Road (or the beginning if you are travelling the other way!) on a lake (the Forggensee). The River Lech flows through the town centre which is set against the spectacular backdrop of the Alps.

The town has a wealth of historical interest and was an important centre of German violin making in the Baroque age, but it's also close to some of the most popular castles in southern Germany – Neuschwanstein Castle and Hohenschwangau Castle which we will visit.



British Airways has a ticket sale at the moment, so if you are interested you should book your flights before the price goes up. Book BA flight BA0950 from Heathrow to Munich, leaving on 15 January at 08.55, arriving in Munich at 11.50. Return on flight BA0961 Monday 18 January from Munich to Heathrow at 19.15, arriving at 20.20. The cost is £100 if you only take hand luggage (e.g. a small suitcase and handbag, toiletries in a clear plastic bag, no liquids, etc.). It will cost £130 if you want to take one suitcase in the hold (especially if you are taking walking sticks). If you pay with a credit card you will be charged £5, so you may wish to use a debit card instead. Once you have booked your flight, please let me know.

Accommodation will be in B&B. Transfer from Munich to Füssen by train.

Dominique (01707 886 548 or [tonybyrnes@compuserve.com](mailto:tonybyrnes@compuserve.com))

## **2016 YHA Weekend at Lulworth Cove, Dorset**

Friday 12th to Sunday 14th March

The hostel is in the tranquil fishing village of West Lulworth and only minutes from the famous cove. It is a cedar-clad building in an area of outstanding natural beauty. It has 34 beds arranged in four, five and six-bedded rooms. As usual, we will restrict the party to a manageable number, so that the hostel is not overcrowded.

Travel from London Waterloo by South West Trains to Wool Station where taxis will take us the five miles to Lulworth. We will dine in the nearby Castle Inn on the Friday night and have expertly-cooked meals by the talented chefs amongst us in the hostel Saturday night.

One walk will take us to the perfect shell-shaped Cove, the iconic limestone arch of Durdle Door and the magnificent cliff scenery in between. For the other walk, we will climb to the top of Bindon Hill for stunning views, but hopefully not explosive ones as it lies within the Army's firing ranges! The cost of the weekend is estimated to be £75, which includes train and taxi fares, and in-house food.

To reserve a place, please transfer £30 to the Club's account (number 29935940, sort code 05-02-00) or send a cheque, made out to the Club, to Danny Duffy, Flat 2, Gooch House, 63-75 Glenthorne Road, London W6 0JY.

**Danny**



Picture: [Lulworthcoveonline.co.uk](http://Lulworthcoveonline.co.uk)

## 2016 Spring Bank Holiday Weekend in South-West Ireland

Thursday 26th to Monday 30th May

It is now approaching ten years since we last visited Ireland. A remark by one of our members on a recent walk about a possible visit initiated plans for this excursion to Killarney in the Emerald Isle. The town was developed as a resort in the 18th & 19th centuries, because of its proximity to three beautiful lakes and Ireland's highest mountain range, the Macgillycuddy's Reeks. We will be based in this lively town, which has good facilities and a vibrant traditional music scene.

Our walks will include:

- a circular trip by bus and boat to the starkly beautiful Gap of Dunloe;
- a circuit of the Muckross Estate with its Victorian stately home, ruined Franciscan Friary and delightful lake and
- a climb up Torc Mountain for stunning views of lakes and mountains.

Our accommodation in Killarney will be in B&Bs. Kerry Airport is 9 miles north of the town and has Ryanair flights from Stansted and Luton Airports. There are also direct rail links with Dublin and Cork, thus providing opportunities to travel overland from London. Please contact Danny (qprduffy20@hotmail.com or 07591-999016) to register interest. Those who do so will be notified as soon as flights become available for booking later this year.

**Danny**



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## Club Walking Holiday in Grazalema, Andalusia June 2015

Sandra and I had visited this part of Southern Spain several times, sometimes combining it with a trip to Seville. The village of Grazalema is some 850 metres above sea level, and set in a rugged mountainous area of national park of the same name. It is the wettest part of Spain, with more than 2 metres of rain per year due to its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. Fortunately this falls mostly in the winter months. The diversity of flora and fauna makes it a very popular destination for nature lovers, particularly in Spring.

The week leading up to our departure was fraught, with a threatened rail strike that would have made getting to Gatwick very difficult. Fortunately, it was called off the day before and although our journey was uneventful, it was with great relief that we stepped down from the coach in the main square of the attractive mountain village of Grazalema. Our hotel, La Casa de las Piedras, is formed from a number of small, but fine 19<sup>th</sup> century houses from when the village was prosperous due to its woollen factories.



It was a warm evening and we took a turn round the village, enjoying extensive views before having a leisurely meal sitting outside the Restaurant Simancon. There were geckos on the walls and birds swooping to catch insects; London seemed a long way away. We met up with Clive Muir, the designer of our new website, who lives in the village, Sandra and having met him on a previous trip. Apart from being a web designer, he is one half of Wildside Holidays, who organise walking holidays in the area.

On Saturday, we all took a coach to nearby Montejaque, with a choice of longer and shorter walking routes back to Grazalema. There were 13 of us on the longer walk and we were fortunate to have Sue Eatock, the other half of Wildside Holidays, as our guide. Her extensive knowledge of animal and plant life made it a special day. Our route took us gradually up to a hidden valley where cattle are grazed. Sue took us on a scorpion hunt, poked sticks into holes in the ground to entice spiders out, told us about cork production and provided refreshments in her garden at the end of the walk. Here we were entertained by her cat and had a chance to view her display boards of photographs of flora and fauna. We learned that Spain is now the largest producer of cork. A cork tree will be 35 years old before its first harvest, after which it will be harvested every 9 years to prevent damage to the tree. Cork is the tree's natural defence to forest fires so the ground must be cleared around the tree before each harvest to minimise the risk. Although most of us associate cork with wine bottles, it does in fact have many uses and is an ancient and valuable industry.

## Club Walking Holiday in Grazalema, Andalusia June 2015 continued

On Sunday, we found the road outside our hotel was covered in straw, this being the day of the celebration of Corpus Cristi. I had arranged for Clive to lead the shorter walk and having experienced the quality of Sue's guiding, the majority of the group opted for this, one of the classic Grazalema day walks, via Puerto del Boyar and the Endrinal. Although shorter in distance, it did involve more climbing than the longer walk.

I, therefore, had a relatively easy task of leading a group of six to Villalengua via la Charca Verde. There had been an unusually hot spell in May, and Sue informed us that the summer was advanced by a couple of weeks. Our route took us along the shady east side of the mountain called Reloj through cool pine forest and there were still plenty of flowers about. We were walking with a deadline of catching the 3.45 bus from Villalengua, but we achieved this with something to spare, having time for a beer in the bar situated conveniently by the bus stop. Rural buses in Spain are much superior to our own, being more like luxury coaches and we were quickly transported in air conditioned comfort back to Grazalema. Alighting in the main square, we found the other group were well ensconced under cafe umbrellas.

On Monday, those doing the short walk were taken by taxi to the attractive village of El Bosque. From here they had a pleasant walk following a river to Benamahoma where an extended lunch was enjoyed before catching a service bus back to Grazalema. The longer walk was in the region of Zahara. Our coach took us on the twisting road over the Puerto de las Palomas where we stopped briefly. To the north we could see the Garganta Verde, home of a large colony of gryphon vultures, which would see from the other side later. Our walk initially followed a stream uphill through lush vegetation. At the top, the view opened out and we descended gradually past the rocky Garganta Verde, with vultures circling above. The walk notes mentioned a bathing spot and although some of us took a dip it was a bit of a disappointment, the water being shallow and not very fragrant. Our destination, Zahara is perched on a rock and having made the ascent into the village we were found the whole place given over to a festival. They take Corpus Cristi seriously here, the festivities running over two days. The cobbles had been covered with hay and there seemed to be a competition in making whips out of reeds and cracking them, rawhide style. It was just a wonderful family event with people of differing generations speaking to one another and not a mobile phone in sight. After a welcome drink in the main square, we made a final ascent up the mediaeval fort and stunning views over the surrounding countryside.

On Tuesday, our coach dropped 16 of us off at Estacion de Benjoan where we greeted by a ginger cat before we set off to walk to Ronda. It's an undulating route with fine open views, but this was the hottest day of our trip with temperatures nudging 35 degrees. There were stretches with very little shade and some of us were suffering, but we reached Ronda without major incident. This is a very attractive town, straddling a dramatic gorge and we passed the afternoon recuperating/sightseeing, before taking a service bus back to Grazalema. Here we enjoyed a final group meal at our hotel and then on Wednesday, all too soon it was time to go home.

Thanks to those who came on the trip and made the organiser's job relatively easy by turning up at the appointed hour and generally doing as they were told. It's a bit of a worry when you bring people to an area that you have come to like (will they see it in the same way?) but Sandra and I really enjoyed introducing the Polyramblers to Grazalema.

Mike Coyle

## **Dedication of walk leaders - Learning about Sewage**

I have often been teased by Stuart, because some of my walks have passed quarries, rubbish dumps and sewage farms. I surpassed myself on my last walk when we got lost in the sewage farm in Hitchin. After this, I was curious to learn how Sewage Treatment Works (STW) work, so on London Open House Day, I registered myself and Tony (unbeknown to him) for a tour of Deephams Sewage Treatment Works in Edmonton.

On a sunny day, we turned up in Deephams for our tour. We were driven in a mini bus to offices where there was tea, coffee, juice and biscuits for visitors. I was impressed by the Bootie Butler in the entrance. It is an automatic shoe cover dispenser which should be available in all pubs in the winter!

We joined a group for our induction where the work of the STW and the upgrading of the site were explained. It is London's fourth largest sewage works that treats the wastewater of 850,000 homes around Enfield and Edmonton and also the water from flood drains. The site is owned by Thames Water who is using contractors to upgrade the sewage treatment process while continuing to treat the 209,000 tonnes of flow arriving at the works each day. This can increase to over 1.3 million tonnes during heavy rainfall – enough to fill 520 Olympic swimming pools.

We learnt about the three main stages of the treatment process: primary settlement, secondary treatment and final settlement. There are only 21 people working on the site and everything is automated. With the building work going on, there are around 200 to 400 workers. We were told that, in the old days, the tanks were cleaned by hand!

After our induction, we donned a helmet and a high visibility jacket and were driven around the site in a minibus by the building manager. We saw where the waste arrives and were told that one of the major problems is caused by the wet wipes and nappies that people flush in the loos, as they do not biodegrade. We got off the bus to stand on a wire platform above one of the huge primary settlement tanks. It was the only place where there was a smell.

We saw the secondary treatment tanks where air bubbles to encourage bacteria to eat the tiny bits of sewage in the wastewater. These tanks are going to be covered with the aim of eliminating 99% of odours. The final settlement tanks are the round tanks familiar to everybody. The 40 tanks are going to be demolished to be replaced by 10 larger tanks. We went pass the spheres where the methane is stored to generate power to run the site.

And finally, we saw the end product: the cakes (why this name!?). The cakes are similar to compost and used in Norfolk and Suffolk to grow vegetables.

Altogether, it was an interesting visit and we learnt a lot. As Pam says, we should take an interest as we all contribute!

Dominique